

## The results are in: One is not enough for Americans

■ **FOOD:** Results of a 1994 Agriculture Department survey show that Americans are eating less fat and more snack foods

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are eating four times as much Mexican food and three times as much popcorn and pretzels as they did two decades ago. We are managing to eat less fat, but we're putting on the pounds anyway.

A 1994 Agriculture Department survey of 5,500 Americans found that half ate no fruit on a given day. They readily passed up dark green and deep yellow vegetables, despite official advice to eat more. One in three adults was overweight. Children were getting off to a sweet start, switching from milk to soft drinks or apple-based juices.

The survey came out two weeks after the government issued updated guidelines

telling people to eat more grains, eat five helpings of fruits and vegetables a day and try to get 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day.

Americans did report eating a lot more grain, but that category included a 200 percent increase in snacks and a 60 percent increase in ready-to-eat cereals. Consumption of "grain mixtures" such as pizza and lasagna more than doubled. Ethnic foods such as Mexican cuisine added to

the mixtures.

Because many foods were listed, ethnic foods included low-fat items like salsa and rice and fatter ones such as refried beans.

The reported tripling in consumption of snack foods such as crackers, popcorn, pretzels and corn chips astonished even the industry.

"Wow!" said Jane Schultz, of the Snack Foods Association, based in Alexandria, Va.

## School chief confirms she has AIDS

■ **EDUCATION:** Top school official will speak out about AIDS and possibly run for Congress

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Washington's top school official confirmed Tuesday that she has AIDS but vowed not to let "what is possible tomorrow ... defeat me in any way."

"I will remain a fighter," Judith Billings said at a jammed news conference called to announce she won't seek a third term as Washington's elected school chief, to confirm she is considering running for Congress and to talk openly about the AIDS diagnosis that stunned her 10 months ago.

Flanked by her family and sometimes close to tears, Billings said she contracted the AIDS virus 15 years ago when she was artificially inseminated with infected donor sperm.

It's an extremely rare way of getting the virus. Only a handful of such cases have been reported nationally.

Billings said she was diagnosed in March but needed time to adjust before going public.

"As I contemplate the future, the seriousness of my health [problems] cannot be downplayed," she said. "At the same time, I am certainly not going to allow what is possible tomorrow to sidetrack me, derail me, depress me or defeat me in any way."

"Life was never meant to be lived through fear," Billings said.

"I remain the eternal optimist, not Pollyanna. I'm trusting, I'm hopeful and I'm believing."

Billings, a liberal Democrat who served as the president of the nation's state education directors last year, said she

wants to speak out on AIDS prevention, particularly among young people.

Tributes quickly flowed in from state political leaders in both parties.

"I admire her very much for her courage," said Democratic Gov. Mike Lowry, who spoke with her by telephone before the announcement.

Billings' willingness to openly talk about the illness "will elevate and focus attention ... on this pandemic," said Lowry, as always wearing on his lapel the red-ribbon symbol of the AIDS-prevention movement.

"It's a very serious illness. ... Obviously our prayers go out to her," said state House Speaker Clyde Ballard, R-East Wenatchee.

Billings can make a valuable contribution to the effort to educate people about the virus, said Terry Stone, director of the Northwest AIDS Foundation.

Her diagnosis "has changed our view of what living with AIDS means," Stone said. "It expands our whole idea of who has HIV and AIDS."

The number of women with HIV is growing proportionately faster than other groups, he said. The virus is transmitted through bodily fluids, and most are infected through sexual contact or needle use.

Billings, 56, who has held the state's nonpartisan school post for eight years, said she had always intended to step down after two terms. She said she almost resigned after the AIDS diagnosis, but changed her mind.

"I feel fantastic," she said. "I feel better than I have in years."

She said she's looking for a new challenge and is considering a bid for the Democratic

nomination in the 9th Congressional District, now represented by freshman Republican Rep. Randy Tate.

"We need grownups in Congress," she said, characterizing recent debate on Capitol Hill as sounding "like a lot of kids quarreling in the sandbox."

Lowry said Billings would make an outstanding congresswoman, but stopped short of endorsing her over state Sen. Adam Smith, the only announced Democratic contender.

Billings, an attorney, said she will consider Congress and other options and plans to make a decision by the end of March.

She said she's appalled at the dearth of good candidates for her current post. Chris Vance, a Republican King County councilman, and Ron Taber, a conservative Olympia businessman, have declared, but no Democrats have entered the race.

"Quite frankly, I am asking myself 'Is that all there is?'" Billings said.

She said she was devastated by the diagnosis last spring but has rebounded and currently has no symptoms.

"The irony of having contracted HIV because my husband and I wanted our own children is the stuff of movie scripts, not reality, but it is my reality and there is no denying it."

Billings said the illness has strengthened her faith in God and that she is optimistic science will discover ways to prolong the life of AIDS patients if not conquer the disease in her lifetime.

Her husband, Don, is not infected. He called the news "pretty devastating," but said he's proud of his wife's courage.

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